

ABC's of Dyslexia, Common Signs Preschool through College

International Dyslexia Association

Preschool: *The following difficulties may be associated with dyslexia if they are unexpected for the individual's age, educational level, or cognitive abilities. To verify that an individual is dyslexic, he/she should be tested by a qualified testing examiner.*

- May talk later than most children
- May have difficulty pronouncing words, i.e., **busgetti** for **spaghetti**, **mawn lower** for **lawn mower**
- May be slow to add new vocabulary words
- May be unable to recall the right word
- May have difficulty with rhyming
- May have trouble learning the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, colors, shapes, how to spell and write his or her name
- May have trouble interacting with peers
- May be unable to follow multi-step directions or routines
- Fine motor skills may develop more slowly than in other children
- May have difficulty telling and/or retelling a story in the correct sequence
- Often has difficulty separating sounds in words and blending sounds to make words

Grades K-4: *The following difficulties may be associated with dyslexia if they are unexpected for the individual's age, educational level, or cognitive abilities. To verify that an individual is dyslexic, he/she should be tested by a qualified testing examiner.*

- Has difficulty decoding single words (reading single words in isolation)
- May be slow to learn the connection between letters and sounds
- May confuse small words - **at - to, said - and, does - goes**
- Makes consistent reading and spelling errors including:
 - Letter reversals - **d** for **b** as in, **dog** for **bog**
 - Word reversals - **tip** for **pit**
 - Inversions - **m** and **w**, **u** and **n**
 - Transpositions - **felt** and **left**
 - Substitutions - **house** and **home**
- May transpose number sequences and confuse arithmetic signs (+ - x / =)
- May have trouble remembering facts
- May be slow to learn new skills; relies heavily on memorizing without understanding
- May be impulsive and prone to accidents
- May have difficulty planning
- Often uses an awkward pencil grip (fist, thumb hooked over fingers, etc.)
- May have trouble learning to tell time
- May have poor fine motor coordination

Grades 5-8: *The following difficulties may be associated with dyslexia if they are unexpected for the individual's age, educational level, or cognitive abilities. To verify that an individual is dyslexic, he/she should be tested by a qualified testing examiner.*

- Is usually reading below grade level
- May reverse letter sequences - **soiled** for **solid**, **left** for **felt**
- May be slow to discern and to learn prefixes, suffixes, root words, and other reading and spelling strategies
- May have difficulty spelling, spells same word differently on the same page

- May avoid reading aloud
- May have trouble with word problems in math
- May write with difficulty with illegible handwriting; pencil grip is awkward, fist-like or tight
- May avoid writing
- May have slow or poor recall of facts
- May have difficulty with comprehension
- May have difficulty making friends
- May not understand body language and facial expressions of others
- May have trouble with non-literal language (idioms, jokes, proverbs, slang)
- May forget to hand in homework or to bring in homework
- May have difficulty with planning and time management

High School-College Graduates: *The following difficulties may be associated with dyslexia if they are unexpected for the individual's age, educational level, or cognitive abilities. To verify that an individual is dyslexic, he/she should be tested by a qualified testing examiner.*

- May read very slowly with many inaccuracies
- Continues to spell incorrectly, frequently spells the same word differently in a single piece of writing
- May procrastinate reading and writing tasks
- May avoid writing
- May have trouble summarizing and outlining
- May have trouble answering open-ended questions on tests
- May have poor memory skills
- May not adjust well to new settings or to change
- May work slowly
- May have poor grasp of abstract concepts
- May pay too little attention to details or focus too much on them
- May misread information
- May not complete assignments; may complete them and not hand them in
- May have an inadequate vocabulary
- May have an inadequate store of knowledge from previous reading
- May have difficulty with planning and time management

Source: *"Basic Facts about Dyslexia: What Every Layperson Ought to Know"* – © Copyright 1993, 2nd edition 1998 - The International Dyslexia Association.

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